

TO: Senator LeBeau
Representative Berger
Members of the Commerce Committee

FROM: Donna M. Simpson, Executive Director
Eastern Regional Tourism District

RE: S.B.No. 550 An Act Appropriating Funds for the
Connecticut Cruise Ship Task Force

Donna Simpson, Executive Director of the Eastern Regional Tourism District, marketing 42 towns, one being New London the port for cruise ship disembarkation.

I am supporting this bill as I feel cruise ship activity in Connecticut is still shaking out. As an economic stimulus for tourism, cruise ship ports have had success in other New England cities. At least during the development of New London as a port of call the State of Connecticut should partner with the local efforts and have input in the development of the business plan for sustaining the current efforts.

The hard work of a few has now activated the volunteer spirit of many from several towns and businesses as well as individuals. Locals come to see the ships while they are in port. Foot traffic is noticeably increased in New London. City merchants have responded to the "impact of cruise ships..." study by Mitchell College by saying signage, beautification and coordinating events to coincide with port of call visits should be done.

The cruise companies have developed tours to sell to booking passengers to area entities including the Mystic Seaport, Mystic

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Aquarium, Historic ship Nautilus and the Essex Steam Train. Entrepreneurs have been asking my office how to be involved with these tours from as far north as Putnam and Pomfret and south to Guilford.

The locals are hoping this will develop into a regular business activity, with the procedures and plans to support all the work necessary to be a welcoming port and an unforgettable memory.

In order to determine if cruise ships will be a worthwhile economic contributor to the area, the efforts to recruit ships and support port of calls needs to be continued to solidify New London's viability as a port of call or the work and success to date will wither before being fully vetted.

Tourism professionals are hoping the "taste" of the region will bring people back for a proper visit and that word of mouth increases our marketing outreach.

Thank you for your consideration.